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8 December 1948

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

The military seized power in Peru on 30 October and in Venezuela on 24 November. The principal causes seem to have been:

- a. In both countries the armies desired to preserve their prerogatives. (There had been a trend to lessen the influence of the armies in political matters.)
- b. In both countries conservative elements were fearful that the established governments were inaugurating policies considered dangerous to conservative interests. In Peru the conservative elements gave active support to the military; in Venezuela they passively approved the coup.
- c. In neither country was the majority party sufficiently organized to block the coup. The government party was surprisingly weak in Venezuela, while in Peru it had been prevented by circumstances from setting up control of the government.
- d. In both countries the governments had failed to make any important advances in the solution of economic problems and as a result the population generally was discontented and apparently indifferent to change.

Conditions in Ecuador may give the army an opportunity to assume control of the government because:

- a. There is popular discontent with the government's inability to effect solutions of the economic problems;

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- b. The electorate is deeply split among several parties which have been competing with growing intensity in recent weeks, thereby adding to popular uncertainty and confusion;
- c. The President does not have broad popular support;
- d. The army is restive.

Activities of the US or its nationals do not seem to have played an important part in the Peruvian and Venezuelan revolts.

- a. There is no evidence that US companies in any way assisted or encouraged those promoting the coups.
- b. There is no evidence that US-supplied arms played an important part either in the planning of army leaders or in the execution of their plans. (There is, of course, the possibility that US training may have better qualified the army commands to organize and execute their plans.)
- c. Fairly prompt recognition of the new Peruvian government by the US and other countries may have influenced the army's decision in Venezuela, but in any case the situation there was ripe for revolution.

There are, of course, other countries in which seizure of government by the military might occur:

- a. Democratic government is new in Guatemala and Chile, particularly the former, as it was in Peru and Venezuela, and both countries have recently suppressed military plots.
- b. Paraguay and Bolivia have highly unstable governments, and army factionalism now existing in both countries might well be reconciled as it was in Venezuela, in the face of opportunity to seize power.

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The present alliance in Brazil between conservative civilian groups and the army seems satisfactory to both, and their control seems firm.

R. M. HILLENKOTTER  
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